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Worlding Beyond the ‘non-West’ in the Case of Brazil
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The South in ”Global IR”:
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Abstract: As international relations has started to grapple with its geo-cultural parochialism, the focus has been on its “Western-centrism” and on how “non-Western” international relations might be different. This article argues that attempts to deprovincialize “Western” (i.e. Euro-American) international thought do not always revolve around “non-Westerness,” a negation with often cultural-civilizational connotations, but also deploy a North/South worlding that is more bound up with imperial-colonial experience and a “peripheral” concern with economic insertion into the core. Based on interviews with scholars, diplomats, and foreign policy intellectuals in Brazil, the paper explores the different ways “the South” is deployed—as (post)colonial subjectivity, as problematique, as relation, as outside, and as political move—to provide an alternative intervention into the debate on “Global IR.”

Resumen: A medida que las relaciones internacionales comenzaron a lidiar con su parroquialismo geocultural, el enfoque se centró en su «centrismo occidental» y en cómo las relaciones internacionales «no occidentales» podrían ser diferentes. Este artículo argumenta que los intentos de desprovincializar el pensamiento internacional «occidental» (es decir, euroamericano) no siempre giran en torno a la «no occidentalidad», una negación con connotaciones a menudo culturales y civilizacionales, sino que también instalan un mundo norte-sur más ligado a la experiencia imperial-colonial y una inquietud «periférica» con la inserción económica en el núcleo. Realizado en base a entrevistas con académicos, diplomáticos e intelectuales de política exterior en Brasil, este artículo analiza las diferentes formas en que se despliega «el Sur», como subjetividad (pos)colonial, como problemática, como relación, como externo y como movimiento político, para proporcionar una intervención alternativa en el debate sobre las relaciones internacionales globales o «Global IR».

Résumé : Alors que les relations internationales commencent à se débattre avec leur paroquisalisme géo-culturel, l’attention a été attirée sur leur « occidentalocentrisme » et la manière dont des relations internationales « non-occidentales » peuvent différer. Cet article soutient que les tentatives de déprovincialiser la pensée internationale « occidentale » (c’est-à-dire, euro-américaine) ne consistent pas uniquement à « désoccidentaliser » les relations, une négation aux connotations souvent culturelles et civilisationnelles, mais également à déployer une vision du monde reposant plus sur la séparation Nord/Sud - davantage liée à l’expérience impériale et coloniale – et à intégrer les pays « périphériques » dans les pays dits « avancés » via la croissance économique. S’appuyant sur des entretiens avec des experts, des diplomates et des intellectuels en politique étrangère au Brésil, cet article présente les différentes manières dont « le Sud » est considéré : en tant que subjectivité (post)coloniale, en tant que problématique, en tant que relation,
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en tant qu’acteur extérieur et en tant que mouvement politique, afin de fournir une intervention alternative dans le débat sur les « RI mondiales ».

Keywords: Global South, international relations theory, non-Western international relations, Brazil

International relations, long known as a not-so-international discipline dominated by the “West,” presenting only a “West-side story” (Hobson 2012, 16) and ignoring “non-Western perspectives” (Puchala 1997), is currently trying to come to terms with its geo-epistemic parochialism. Over the past decade, scholars have gone from asking “why is there no non-Western IR theory?” (Acharya and Buzan 2007) toward studying how the discipline is practiced “beyond the West” (Tickner and Wæver 2009), searching for “theories beyond the West” (Acharya 2011), exploring “non-Western thought” (Shilliam 2010), ways of “thinking past ‘Western IR’” (Bilgin 2008) and possible conceptual foundations for a redefined “post-Western” discipline (Shani 2008; Shahi and Ascione 2015). Despite substantial critique of the ambiguous and perilous concepts of “West” and “non-West” (Hutchings 2011; Eun 2018; Katzenstein 2018), “Western” thought and its negation (i.e., “non-Western”) or beyond (“post-Western”) has nonetheless been the primary discursive terrain on which these projects have unfolded. Some scholars have recently tried to shift the discourse toward “Global IR” (Acharya 2016), in part to avoid the negative and Orientalist connotations of the “non-West.” The global singular seemingly has no cardinal points, but it is fair to say that “Western” IR and its discontents retain a central role in attempts to navigate in so-called “Global IR.”

Studies of “non-Western” IR have particularly focused on Asia as a site for alternatives to “Western” IR. Numerous studies have examined the debate over a “Chinese School” and its theorizations of ancient Chinese cultural, civilizational, and philosophical resources—such as pre-Qin philosophy, the Tianxia worldview, and Guanxi relationality—have been seen as promising sources for a “non-Western” theory (see Callahan and Barabantseva 2012; Horesh and Kavalski 2014; Zhang and Chang 2016). A growing body of scholarship also examines international relations thinking in India. The Indian conversation on alternative theorizing is often explicitly framed as “post-Western” rather than “non-Western” and opposed to the construction of national schools of thought. But, there are also parallel attempts in it to recover indigenous thinkers, texts, and practices, including “ancient” and pre-colonial scriptures such as the Mahabharata or Arthashastra (Behera 2007; Narlikar and Narlikar 2014; Gautam, Mishra, and Gupta 2016; Shahi 2018). In other Asian IR communities, we also find efforts to theorize “post-Western” or “non-Western” IR based on alternative religious, cultural, civilizational, and philosophical traditions (Shani 2008; Tadjakhsh 2010; Chey and Helleiner 2018; Shimizu 2018), or to carve out a position “between East and West” (Do 2019). The literature on “non-Western” or “post-Western” IR is of course not limited to Asia, although the terms are prevalent in the Asian theory discourse. Several works on African IR also revolve around differences
between “Western” and “non-Western” political, economic, social experiences, and the contributions of, for instance, the collectivist *ubuntu* worldview (Odoom and Andrews 2017; Smith 2018; Niang 2016) even though many seem to prefer the terminology of “North-South” and the project of theorizing “Global South,” rather than “non-Western” IR (Smith 2009, 272; Tieku 2012).

Inquiries into “non/post-Western” thought have significantly advanced the project of decentering international relations in order to open the discipline to different voices, concepts, and perspectives. Even though they have primarily operated on the terrain of the “West,” these works do not always reify, essentialize, or negate the “West.” Works in the “post-Western” vein, such as Ling’s (2013) work on Daoist trialectics, Shahi’s (2018) on advaitic thought (2018), and Bilgin’s (2008; 2016) on hybridity, expressly object against essentialist uses of the “West” versus “non-West” and look instead for Others within. This article is therefore not intended as a critique of the “non/post-Western” IR literature per se, a rather diverse body of scholarship indeed, but as an argument that the search for difference is not always articulated in relation to “the West.” There are alternative cardinal points from which to decenter international relations.

This article focuses on another “meta-geography” (Lewis and Wigen 1997), namely the “North/South” worlding, and how it differs from those centered on “West/Non-West.” This article thus responds to recent calls (coincidentally by some of the leading advocates for “post-Western” IR) for a critical engagement with the mutually constitutive hierarchies between “West” and “non-West” and between “Global North” and “Global South” (Behera 2016) and the hybrids and trialectical relations among them (“the Souths in the North,” “West in the non-West,” and vice versa; Ling 2017); it also adds the need for a critical interrogation of the relationship between different cartographic imaginaries. Cardinal points are used here not as geographical referents, but as metaphors for “worldings” and corollary subjectivities. Cardinal designations of the world are not inscribed on the planet, but “have been historically, economically, politically, and ideologically constructed” (Levander and Mignolo 2011, 9). The interesting question, therefore, is not where the West or South is, but what you can do with it. What knowledge, subjectivities, and political imaginaries do cardinal designations evoke? The uses of the South analyzed below have little to do with the equator, the poles, or the Brandt line, and more with how the Global South works as an “emergent subjectivity” (de Sousa Santos 1995, 579) and “a series of identifications and opportunities” (Levander and Mignolo 2011, 10) that can empower “actors that consider themselves to be in subaltern(ized) positionalities” (Kloß 2017, 1).

The study of different, in this case Southern, worlds of IR knowledge requires a certain “epistemic disobedience,” i.e. a turn from “zero point” epistemologies to the geo-politics of knowledge, from the universal to the pluriversal (Mignolo 2009, 160). View-from-nowhere epistemologies have long dominated international relations and prevented the discipline from recognizing that there are other worlds beyond “the
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West”—and that not all of them are “non-Western.” The basic idea of “worlding” is to move from a totalizing gaze on the international—the Western invention of a singular Westphalian international—toward world politics as a site of multiple worlds (Agathangelou and Ling 2009; Walker 2010; Ling 2013). Toward a more worldly international relations that is both more planetary and transcendent of sovereign particularisms but also more open to the mundane, down-to-earth micro-context of occupying and thinking different worlds. By turning to pluriversality, I therefore reject the project of arriving at a more universal, and thus still singular, “Global IR” that has no cardinal points. We must not study the “periphery” in terms of how it can contribute to making “core” international relations more universal and “global”—by filling in the gaps, adjusting the language, adding regional variation, and admitting “local” thinkers to the existing canon—but as worldings in their own right. That is, not as “regional worlds” that provide local and partial pieces of the global puzzle, but as worlds per se.

These different worldings of course extend beyond the points on a compass. Yet, the “West” vs. “non-West,” and perhaps increasingly “North” versus “South,” have become particularly dominant metageographies in the Global IR discourse and have largely supplanted previous global binaries such as core vs. periphery, First vs. Third, developed vs. developing world. In particular, I explore deployments of the North/South worlding in the case of Brazilian IR where I find multiple voices calling for less dependence on “Northern”—not “Western”—international thought. And where the distinctiveness of alternative perspectives are conceived in terms of “Southernness”—or what others have called “Southern theory” (Connell 2007), “theories from the South” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2016), or “epistemologies of the South” (de Sousa Santos 2016). This stands in contrast to the West/non-West or East/West imaginary, which often evokes cultural-civilizational lines of difference, that has been more prevalent in contemporary Asian debates on IR theory and led to numerous archeological theorizing projects aiming to recover pre-Western civilizational philosophy and culture. If keywords in Asian debates on “non-Western” theorizing have been culture, civilizational resources, ancient philosophies, and religions, “Southernization,” at least in the case of Brazil, operates on a different discursive terrain: that of coloniality and imperialism, peripherality, dependency, and exploitation, and the search for autonomy, development, and insertion. Southernization thus provides an alternative perspective on the debate on a more “Global,” i.e. less Northern, discipline.

Latin American international thought provides an interesting case for exploring alternative worldings exactly because it operates “between West and non-West” (Fawcett 2012, 679) and “has been caught between North–South and Western–non-Western traditions” (Deciancio 2016, 106) in ways that lead to different imaginaries, perspectives, and problem horizons than both Euro-American and Asian scholars. Brazil, in particular, as a case of a “West in the South” remains under-explored in the literature on “Global IR” where it has been subsumed by Latin America. Brazil furthermore provides an interesting comparative
case of international relations in a so-called—until recently at least—"emerging power" that has received less attention than China and India.

As in many other locales beyond the Western core, Brazilian scholars have criticized the fact that international relations remains an “American social science” (Herz 2002, 9; Saraiva 2009; Jatobá 2013, 28; Lorenzini and Doval 2013, 11; Ventura and Lins 2014, 111). It is seen as problematic that Brazilian scholars have not developed a Brazilian perspective but continue to view the world through a North-Atlantic “optic that is not ours” (Vizentini 2005, 30). Some even advocate for “banning the epistemological imperialism of international relations theory” in favor of locally rooted concepts (Cervo 2009, 62) because theories expounding a hegemonic worldview are not well-suited to explain the “international insertion” of peripheral countries (Lessa 2005, 10; Cervo 2003). Despite critiques of international relations as an “American Social Science” and the growth of Brazilian thought on international relations since the 1990s (Vizentini 2005, 24; Lessa 2006, 14), scholars lament that there has not been a parallel growth in original theories, and raise the questions of what contributions Brazilians can make and whether there is “an indigenous view” (Pinheiro 2008, 7). This led some Brazilian scholars to propose a move toward new “loci of enunciation” that view the world from the periphery or South (Jatobá 2013, 30)—and not the non-West—and advocate that Brazilian scholars should develop “theories of the South” (Lorenzini and Doval 2013).

This article makes no claim to speak for or from the South, which clearly it cannot. But is motivated by an ambition to engage in conversations with scholars who are themselves involved in debates on how to develop international relations for or from the South in order to understand what “the South” means, and how it is used, as a locus on enunciation. The article is based on interviews with 41 IR scholars, diplomats, and foreign policy intellectuals based in Brazil, mainly at institutions in the three main geographical centers for IR research (Rio de Janeiro, Brasília, and São Paulo) in 2012-2013 and 2019. The project is not to identify the Brazilian or Southern way of looking at the world. Brazilian IR is not monolithic. Quite the contrary, there is a debate on Brazil’s international identity and what a distinctly Brazilian view on international relations looks like (Hurrell 2013, 34). This article is more interested in tracing these various claims about a Brazilian and Southern perspective on international relations than in settling what “it really is.” However, there are also some general commonalities that structure Brazilian discourses on alternative perspectives on international relations compared to their Asian counterparts; in particular, that difference is not based on a West/non-West but a North/South worlding. The interviewees did not posit Brazil as culturally different from “the West”—as “non-Western”—but often as hybrid: Western-but-Southern. Yet, the Southern locus of enunciation means different things to different scholars and the question of how to formulate a Southern conceptual framework for world politics (e.g. while avoiding the methodological nationalism of autonomy and dependency) is contested. In the following, I analyze five uses of the South that
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appeared in my interviews with Brazilian IR scholars: (1) the South as (post)colonial subjectivity, (2) the South as problematique, (3) the South as relation, (4) the South as outside, and (5) the South as a political move.

**The South as (Post)Colonial Subjectivity**

One of the most common uses of the South is as a marker, if not even synonym, of colonial, imperial, and racial oppressions (Comaroff and Comaroff 2016, 45). Levander and Mignolo (2011, 3) define the Global South as an “entity that has been invented in the struggle and conflicts between imperial global domination and emancipatory and decolonial forces.” This comprises “places on the planet that endured the experience of coloniality” but also the “epistemic places where global futures are being forged by delinking from the colonial matrix of power” (Mignolo 2011, 184–185). In a similar vein, de Sousa Santos (2016, 2) defines the Global South as “that large set of creations and creatures that has been sacrificed to the infinite voracity of capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, and all their satellite-oppressions,” which is present at all cardinal points because its “geography is the geography of injustice and oppression” (de Sousa Santos 2016, 4). The North is constituted through “a network of political and economic elites spanning privileged localities across the globe” whereas the global South “is disproportionately made up of “indigenous” communities, people of color and women [and] to be found everywhere” (Sheppard and Nagar 2004, 558). The Global South is said to be both North and South of the equator although it is “unevenly distributed” (de Sousa Santos 1995, 579).

To be sure, both East and South are “products of empire” (de Sousa Santos 1995, 579). But East-West relations predominantly refer to a cultural-civilizational geography of strangers (the radical difference of Occidentalism/Orientalism) and to the antagonistic political geography of the Cold War (Levander and Mignolo 2011, 10). In comparison, the geographies of North and South are “progressively fractal and closely inter-related” (Sheppard and Nagar 2004, 558). As a Brazilian interviewee argued, “The East-West division is that Orientalism-Occidentalism thing,” the “clash of civilizations,” and that “in the East-West you see a clash between strangers almost.” By contrast, in her representation, Brazil and the wider “South” was never a stranger to the “West” like the “East” is. North-South is a relationship of colonial inequality, between colonizer and colonized, which in this representation is a more intimate relation than the East-West clash of “strangers.” By implication, she continues, the “rise” of the South becomes the rise of the colonized and thus more “vindictive”: “North-South it’s more the return of the colonized as champions of world affairs. It really is and that's the kind of impression you get. That's why there is such a big pride in you know India or South Africa or Brazil itself, growing, they see that as, you know, almost vindictive I would say.”

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1 Interview, San Diego, April 4, 2012.
One might think then that any Brazilian attempt to theorize “Southern IR” would be envisioned as a post-, de-, or pre-colonial “indigenous” IR, but coloniality was almost absent from my interviews with Brazilian scholars. One reason is that Brazil’s colonial experience differs in important ways from other “Southern” post-colonial societies, like India and South Africa, in its settler colonial figuration. Brazil’s post-colonial trajectory as a settler colony whose independence was won by local colonizers, not indigenous people, has resulted in a particular kind of intimacy with “the West” despite its Southernness in post-colonial terms. As several interviewees pointed out, “Brazil really considers itself as part of the West” and Brazilians “see ourselves as absolutely Western-centered” but at the same time as different, as “very much a Southern country.”

And, “The idea of the big South is very present in Brazilian views on the world…maybe more than other countries, Brazil has this view as being among the big countries of the South and that's the way it sees itself as an emerging country.” One of the keys to the hybrid Western-but-Southerness is what some authors have called its “peculiar colonial outlook” (Cesarino 2012, 85) or “ambivalent postcolonial subjectivity” (Vieira 2018, 142). Brazil was subject to a “double colonization” in de Sousa Santos’ (2002, 10) terms: Direct colonization by its Western colonizer, Portugal. But since Portugal itself was semi-peripheral and Southern, Brazil also experienced indirect colonization by the core Northern colonizers. Portuguese colonialism, not only in Brazil, would be cast then as an underdeveloped and even “friendly colonialism.” Furthermore, the fact that Brazil itself became an empire in the tropics, a “colonizing colony” engaging in internal colonization of domestic subalterns, is also important for understanding the ambiguous Western-but-Southern identity (de Sousa Santos 2002, 10-12, 34; Cesarino 2012, 91). Brazil’s perceived Western-but-Southernness therefore cannot be reduced to a matter of geographical location in the Western and Southern hemisphere, but also its history and culture as a Christian settler colony as well as its politically closeness to the United States (at least before and during the military dictatorship) and as a member of the Western bloc during the Cold War (Fonseca 2011, 379). As an interviewee noted,

Brazil is actually really proud of its Western identity and it doesn’t only define it in terms of the hemisphere but also in terms of its history as descendants of Portuguese and Spanish colonizations, so it’s part of that. In terms of its values, you know, its approach to human rights and the respect for values that shared with the West, which are part of the West. And I think our culture as well.

The implication for international relations and foreign policy, as Hurrell (2013, 32-33) has pointed out, is that Brazilian foreign policy elites see themselves as descendants of Western colonizers: culturally,

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2 Interview, San Diego, April 4, 2012; Interview, São Paulo, June 14, 2013.
3 Interview, São Paulo, June 14, 2013.
4 Interview, San Diego, April 4, 2012.
religiously, and politically “Western” and, importantly, as distinct from indigenous peoples. The result has been an ambiguous attitude toward colonialism and imperialism among this community, an “anomaly” that grew out of its special relationship to Portugal and “the settlement in Brazil of a vocal and wealthy Portuguese community” (Fonseca 2011, 381). Therefore, one of the few post-colonial scholars interviewed argued, Brazilian intellectuals and the public always “saw the colonial past in a different way, more romantic way” than for example Indian intellectuals.\(^5\) Indeed, Western (i.e. Portuguese) colonialism hardly figures in my interviews with Brazilian foreign policy and IR scholars. Anti-imperialist sentiments do, but they are directed North, at the United States. As a Portuguese scholar based in Brazil noted, “Portugal is completely forgotten in that regard. It was a long, long time ago, so since then they [the US] were the bullies, the historical bullies. I mean Brazil became independent in the 19th century with the Portuguese royal family.”\(^6\)

Another, more senior scholar went so far as to argue that Brazil is not a post-colonial country and that post-colonial thought does not apply to Brazil:

> The concept of post-colonial, which is very famous, fashionable in sociology and IR, I guess. Post-colonial has nothing to do with us. We are not post-colonial. We did our independence in the 19th century. Different from India and from Africa. So we have been more than much before. The post-colonial is not a concept appropriate to our reality and maybe we just make this transfer, adaptation of concepts, not adaptation, we use concepts without thinking in terms of the adaptability to our context.\(^7\)

Two other interviewees, one of them a former foreign minister, contended that Brazil’s post-colonial agony is even less than China’s which experienced a century of humiliation (“We do not have the same shared difficult experience”):

Interviewee 1: We were never invaded by other countries as China was by Japan.

PMK: Mmm, and Portuguese colonialism doesn’t play that kind of role?

Interviewee 2: No, no, no. Do not forget that today Portugal is a country with which Brazil has very good relationships, close relationships, and Portugal is not a threat to Brazil…The son of the Portuguese King who later became a Portuguese King who was responsible for the independence. The monarchy was a continuation of the Braganzas. So there is a change but there is a continuity.

Interviewee 1: And there has never been a hatred against Portuguese in Brazil, never.

PMK: So there isn’t the same kind of post-colonial complex?

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\(^5\) Interview, Rio de Janeiro, January 24, 2019.

\(^6\) Interview, Brasilia, June 17, 2013.

\(^7\) Interview, Rio de Janeiro, June 25, 2013.
Interviewee 2: No, no!...No certainly, we are a result of the Portuguese.⁸

As this exchange illustrates, the “we” on whose behalf these members of the foreign policy elite speak were “never invaded” or colonized, but were instead descendants of the colonizers. This illustrates how hegemonic settler culture distinguishes us/them through the settler/native binary, not through Brazil/Portugal as colonized/colonizer or non-Western/Western. The condition of possibility for the elite to portray Brazil as a “Western” country that was “never invaded” and is not “post-colonial” is a historical erasure of the “non-Western” within, the erasure of the experience of those most oppressed by colonialism and slavery: the indigenous and Afro-descendant communities (Taylor 2012, 390). In this settler colonial historiography, the indigenous and non-Western connotes the pre-Columbian and pre-colonial, which in this view seemingly was not “Brazil.” By implication, an indigenous approach to international relations would not qualify as a Brazilian approach to international relations.

The suppression of coloniality, and resulting intimacy with the West, meant that few interviewees saw Brazil’s colonial experience or an “archaeological” exploration of its indigenous and pre-colonial past as a potential resource for “non-Western” IR theorization (as has been the case in several Asian IR communities). The silence on Portuguese colonialism attests to its pervasiveness, not the contrary. Colonialism was so disruptive and permanent, indigenous traditions so uprooted and destroyed that, to most interviewees, there is no indigenous Brazilian past to recover (“what existed in Brazil before [colonialism] is of course completely destroyed. 0.1 percent of the population lives in indigenous communities”).⁹ This led one interviewee, employing the archaeological digging metaphor, to caution me: “I think you are digging in the wrong place, to quote Dr. Jones, Indiana Jones, you are digging in the wrong place. The world is American-centric, the world is European-centric. We are talking in English, not in Mandarin or in Swahili. Why would we expect us to be different in science?”¹⁰ The digging metaphor is illuminating because Brazil has not witnessed a parallel project of recovering lost civilizational resources like in China, India, and other Asian IR communities (where such an argument would be almost inconceivable). The intimacy with “the West” thus also provides part of the explanation why the West/non-West dichotomy did not play a dominant role in my interviews with Brazilian scholars, especially compared to interviews with Asian IR scholars conducted for the same project. Categories such as “non-Western IR,” “post-Western IR,” or “IR beyond the West” made little sense as a locus of difference. The settler colonial perception of Latin America as part of the West is also one of the reasons why the region has not been deemed worthy of separate attention in the

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discourse on non-Western IR (Fawcett 2012, 679). Yet, the intimate relationship with the West makes it all the more interesting as a site for a decolonial exploration of alternative worlds (Taylor 2012, 386).

Some scholars interviewed did rebel against the settler colonial view of Brazil as Western and not post-colonial (“the idea that Brazil is like Western [countries] denies its colonial past” and “this is a negation of our condition”), against its indigenous erasure (“nobody remembers our indigenous peoples”), and the pervasive racism despite the assiduous national myth of “miscegenation” and racial harmony (“we are a racist society” and “racism here is different because racism in each country is different, but it is racism, and you have a practical apartheid”) But they remained a minority among the interviewees. More widespread was the sentiment that Brazil, despite identifying as Western, is misrecognized as “fully Western” by “the West.” Brazil represents “Another West” as former foreign minister Celso Lafer (2000, 213) wrote, “a poorer, more enigmatic, more problematic West, but no less the West.” Or, as an interviewee phrased it, “I think we are definitely not Western, we have, maybe we have some Western stuff, but we are others.” The otherness alluded to here is Southernness; that Brazil is misrecognized as Western by the Northern part of the West.

The liminal condition of being not-quite-Western is most explicit in encounters with “Northern Westerners.” One scholar recounted an experience from attending an international security conference, which was “totally like the West against the rest” and you, as a Brazilian delegate, “get totally treated as a non-Western person.” Another prominent expert on Brazilian foreign policy recounted a similar experience of misrecognition as non-Western:

I still remember the day, the first time ever in my life in which I realized, talking to people, that they did not consider me to be someone from the West and the utter shock to my system that that was (...) it came as a shock and most people are shocked and when in shock many get offended because they introjected this notion that the West is good and the rest is bad and we do not mingle with the bad, we do not belong to this Latin American nonsense.

As this experience illustrates, the otherness that misrecognizes Brazil as not-quite-Western is connected to a Southern-Latin identity. The Southern-Latin Othing of Brazil has a strong imperial and racial dimension. Indeed, the notion of the “South Americas” has had racist undertones since at least the

11 Interview, Rio de Janeiro, January 24, 2019.
12 Interview, Brasilia, June 19, 2013.
14 Interview, Rio de Janeiro, June 24, 2013.
15 Interview, São Paulo, January 28, 2019.
16 Interview, São Paulo, January 28, 2019.
1920s (Fawcett 2012, 689). Brazil’s interpellation as Southern, Latin, and “not-quite-Western” therefore, another interviewee explains, often also implies racial “non-whiteness”:

We want to be Western, but I mean since Huntington in *Clash of Civilizations* says ‘oh, there is a Latin American civilization, we are not from the Western’ so I think, I have a lot of students who go to the US. In the US you have this race stuff and they always put white, and then ‘no, no, no, you are Latin’ and ‘No, I am white, professor why do you tell I am not white? Because I am, for god’s sake, a Brazilian.’ They just got really hurt because they are not considered white in the US. It’s quite bizarre. They want to be Western.17

This encounter exemplifies the misrecognition of being “white but not quite” that also plays a major role in Brazil domestic identity politics and pigmentocracy (de Santana Pinho 2009). The Huntingtonian idea that Brazil is not part of the West but a Latin American civilization is hard to put into a “Brazilian cabeça,” a senior scholar interviewed argued.18 In part because Brazil has historically had an ambiguous relationship to the region and Latinidad as an identity. Brazil historically looked to Europe and the United States, not Latin America, as Bethell (2010) has argued. Despite their common Iberian and Catholic background, Brazilian elites never conceived Brazil as a “Latin” country nor did the Spanish American elites. Brazil was always the odd country in the region due to its language, size, history of colonialism and independence, and political institutions: the white empire in the tropics and the last American country to abolish slavery (Bethell 2010, 461–465).

**The South as Problematique**

Another prevalent use of the South is the argument that there is a series of problems particular to the South and that Southern scholars should study their own problems from their own perspective rather than that of the North. This is the closest to an “epistemological South”—what Comaroff and Comaroff (2016, 3) call an “ex-centric” and “peripheral vision.” Here Southernization is a process of empirical, conceptual, and theoretical vernacularization. A double vernacularization that requires as a first move a process of unlearning, or at least not accepting prima facie, the North “American agenda.” This first move creates a legitimate space for an equally parochial and vernacular Southern IR that examines Southern questions. The proposed solution is thus not necessarily to develop a radically different theory based on “Brazilian culture,” but to conduct research on the problems most pressing to Brazil and similar countries in the South.

In the first move, the argument is that theoretical debates in North American IR between neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism or over American decline, the “End of History” (Fukuyama 1989) or “Clash

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17 Interview, Rio de Janeiro, June 24, 2013.
18 Interview, Brasília, June 17, 2013.
of Civilizations” (Huntington 1993) have no connection to “the specific problems of a ‘peripheral’ and ‘dependent’ nation, as Brazil’s own academy classified the country” (Almeida in Kenkel 2005, 122). For North Americans, a Marxist-developmentalist argues, the question is “how to conserve the power” whereas “we think about the change of international world.” Brazil’s vernacular question is development and change, he continues, “Brazilian participation in BRICS, the logic of this action, international action is to promote development, is to change the international order in order to create new opportunities for the development. This is the question.”  

Another prominent scholar in Brazilian IR made a similar first move against American theories, which “are all focused on the experience of the US” and proposed emerging power theorizing “from our standpoint” instead. The second move need not be counter-hegemonic theories (“but may be”) but to start thinking from a Southern, emerging power perspective. Brazil and the Global South should simply do what “North America” did before it, a self-declared nationalist-developmentalist argued, “they developed the science to think about North America, the problems of North America.” North American scholarship “is not thinking the world, but it’s thinking US policy,” this interviewee continued, and argued that this “critical step” of provincializing North American IR is “common” in Brazil due to the influence of post-colonialism, constructivism, and Marxist-dependency perspectives: “I think that's the influence of post-colonialism and constructivism, apart from the very Marxist view of oppression and class clashes and North-South.” Other scholars have also represented the parochialization move beyond Northern and “Americocentric” IR, and the second move of thinking “IR through a Brazilian prism,” as a quintessentially Brazilian approach to international relations (Ferreira-Pereira and Resende 2010, 14).

In this dual vernacularization move beyond the North American agenda, some empirical topics are believed to be fashionable in “Northern countries” but have no relevance whatsoever to Brazil (war, terrorism, and traditional security studies are mentioned on several occasions). Some relate this argument to Brazil’s hemispheric conditions: Brazil’s main security threats are economic rather than military or terrorist threats. The implicit assumption in this critique is that Brazilian scholars should study things of relevance to Brazil and like-minded countries in the South, not things that may have relevance to “the world” or the “international system.” A senior scholar of Brazilian foreign policy advocated a turn to “tropical” problems and concepts appropriate to “countries as Brazil” as the only way “to build new theories”:

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21 Interview, Rio de Janeiro, June 25, 2013.
I think we should try to develop concepts that are appropriate to situations or countries as Brazil, but not Brazilian concepts. It would be a very nationalistic kind of a question. But you have, like for example, let’s take another example from other fields like for example in the medical field tropical disease are not a subject of empirical research or even industrial interests in the Northern countries because there is no tropical disease. But tropical disease is a very important problem in our, in Latin America, whatever. So if you could say problems as this…there are problems that are peculiar to a group of countries [and when asked what those ‘tropical problems’ may be, the scholar continues] I think asymmetry, the issue of asymmetry is very important to us, it’s not important in Northern discussion, narratives. We face asymmetry in the region toward our neighbors and we face asymmetry in the world. So I think asymmetry is, there is not too much work done on asymmetry, no? Yes? It’s like dependence (…) maybe our tropical disease would be that [laughing].

To tropicalize international relations is to make it more relevant to the context and problems of the South (development, autonomy, insertion, change), not North (military security, war, terrorism, hegemonic stability). Rather than seeing this as a turn toward nationalizing international relations, theories aimed at the IR problems of Brazil—like the tropical diseases Brazil faces—can have a wider Southern appeal. The project is to develop “concepts” based on problematiques from your “backyard” that are useful to other countries like Brazil, as another scholar put it. The context of being in the South, in this representation, makes development, inequality, and autonomy key problematiques: “development and inequality and autonomy are very important for someone who is doing social science in Brazil in a broader perspective.”

There is a key difference between, as another interviewee exemplifies, the problem of “how attract foreign investment” and “deciding where to invest.” While the above-mentioned “Southern problems” might find resonance elsewhere in the “South,” it is more questionable however whether the examples of “Northern problems,” such as terrorism, security, and war, will also be as easily rejected in other Southern locations.

This use of the South is also critiqued by interviewees taking a more global-universalist perspective. One such critic argued that international relations, including the discipline and its key problematiques, is becoming more “globalized, not South” and advocated for more “global dialogue” rather than a Southern focus.

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23 Interview, Rio de Janeiro, June 25, 2013.
24 Interview, São Paulo, June 12, 2013.
25 Interview, Brasília, June 18, 2013.
26 I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.
27 Interview, Brasilia, June 19, 2013.
The South as Relation

Another common use of the North-South worlding is as a relational and hierarchical concept that constructs difference “vertically”—the South is “below” in the global hierarchy—rather than “horizontally” as cultural difference. The Global South “bespeaks a relation, not a thing in or for itself” and in this sense often becomes “the suppressed underside of the north.” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2016, 47, 4). The notion of “North-South relations” is most often deployed to signify a hierarchical economic relation (“The North-South is the, very crudely speaking, it’s the rich-poor divide, right?,” one interviewee reasoned).28 This conceptualization of North-South relations as rich-poor, affluent-impoverished relations is often traced back to the 1980 Brandt Line, which drew the demarcation line at the 30th parallel North, excepting Australia and New Zealand (Tlostanova 2011, 69; Prashad 2012). The relational use of the North-South worlding is more related to the functional division into core and periphery, however, than any attempt to superimpose onto a map a geographical line demarcating a poor South from a rich North. The Brazilian scholars interviewed often used North/South and core/periphery interchangeably. The legacy of Raúl Prebisch and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean’s (CEPAL) center-periphery distinction and later elaborations in dependency theory are indeed seen as formative of its distinctively Southern perspective. Dependency theory, as an influential Brazilian scholar argues, represents “a native and original view of international relations, following a tradition of thought characterized by a Southern perspective” (Pinheiro 2008, 8). Other observers of Brazilian foreign policy have also argued that dependency and its structural-relational view on global asymmetries informs the Brazilian “worldview” (Burges 2009, 74). Note how one interviewee posited dependency as the background for viewing the world and Brazil’s place in it through “an opposition to North and South, core and periphery”:

It is still very much the background to see how the world is organized. And I think it’s influential, not only, so it’s interesting to say a Brazilian view of the world, of IR, how the world is made and how it works. The kind of diplomacy Brazil tries to have, to be a country which tries to be influential in political, multilateral arenas, because it is a country, which up to now didn't have military power to be influential by itself alone. I think this has a lot to do with trying to influence, and there is a neo-Marxist view on trying to have structural power, influence the way decisions are made, and it has to do with getting to the core. Be influential among the core and at the same time be a representative of the South. That would be way Brazilian diplomats and most Brazilian scholars view the way the world is made.29

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28 Interview, San Diego, April 4, 2012.
29 Interview, São Paulo, June 14, 2013.
To this interviewee, the dependency legacy on the “Brazilian view of the world” divides the world into “core” and “periphery” and their corollaries, North and South. Dependency theory may no longer be in vogue as an IR theory in Brazil—several interviewees portrayed it as “archaeological stuff” and “not IR”—but the dependency (and Cepalist) worldview lingers in the relational uses of North-South as a core-periphery divide that is constitutive of how “the world is made.”

While often reduced to level of economic development (rich versus poor) and functional (industrial versus commodity producers) relations—much like developed/developing world, first/third world or core/periphery—the relational view of North-South can also be used to describe wider global structures of inequality, hierarchy, and dominance (Kleinschmidt 2018). The South in this wider relational sense signifies misrecognition and produces, in the words of an interviewee, “a very strong sentiment of inferiority.” That is, Brazil is perceived to be on the bottom, below, South of the world: “we have, if you translate, something like a Mongrel law, like we believe that we are on the bottom of the world.” Several interviewees noted that Brazil is famous known for its “stray dog”, “mongrel dog” complex or “complexo de vira-lata”, a term originally coined by the writer Nelson Rodrigues that translates into a “can-turner” straying through garbage (Rohter 2012, 224). This is not only a product of Northern misrecognition, another scholar contended, but also Brazilian self-identity and low confidence (“you can never underestimate how badly we think of ourselves”) resulting in a feeling that everything foreign is superior: “Brazil has the inferiority complex. So you are going abroad, ‘oh my god.’ You know, whatever comes from abroad it’s by definition better and we are worthless.”

Southernness is defining for this sense of being on the “bottom of the world” and neither quite “Western” nor “non-Western.”

Unlike the more culturalist uses of East-West, however, relational uses of the South often imply that the Southern condition is liminal, and thus potentially changeable, even as a “becoming-North”: That is, the “South” may be “below,” “underdeveloped,” and “dependent,” but can become “North” by virtue of economic development and autonomy. The search for autonomy, in particular, has been a keyword in Brazilian IR (Lima and Hirst 2006, 21; Fonseca 2011, 383), and it has been described as “the perennial goal of Brazilian foreign policy” (Burges 2009, 2). Autonomy, as a senior interviewee argued, “is a very dear word and label for Brazilian foreign policy and diplomats.” Autonomy is based on an idea that Brazil is condemned to greatness, but held back in a relationship of dependence, and therefore needs autonomy to

30 Interview, São Paulo, June 14, 2013.
31 Interview, Rio de Janeiro, June 24, 2013.
33 Interview, São Paulo, June 14, 2013.
34 Interview, São Paulo, June 12, 2013.
fulfill its destiny (Fonseca 2011, 386). The autonomy literature was strongly influenced by the dependency worldview and the idea of global patterns of domination (Burges 2009, 2–3). But, it also diverged from dependency theory because it “portrays the world order as a differentiated system in which distinct states occupy varied positions based upon their territorial integrity, self-determination and capacity to sanction eventual aggressors, and not just their role in the global division of labor” (Tickner 2008, 741). An interviewee working on autonomy also noted the close relationship to dependency: “autonomy is important in contradiction to dependence. The more autonomous you are, the less dependent you are. So if you look at Brazilian foreign policy history, we always tried to be autonomous especially regarding the United States. And so yes it is a very important concept.”

Autonomy is represented as the opposite of dependency, and explicitly as autonomy from the United States.

Relational uses of the South, understood as North-South relations, as well as dependency and autonomy thinking have been criticized for being overly state-centric by analyzing mostly inequalities and hierarchies between states (Kleinschmidt 2018, 3)—in this case Brazil and the United States. However, several interviewees also noted how the debate on autonomy has shifted from the need to “distance ourselves from the United States” to becoming more about “projection of power” (see also the shift from autonomy through distance to autonomy through participation and diversification; Cepaluni and Vigevani 2012). Since the 1990s, Tickner (2009, 48) notes, there has been a conceptual turn from dependency and autonomy from the United States toward “global insertion.” That is, the quest for autonomy has changed from seeking detachment from the United States/North toward playing a more autonomous role as an emerging power from the Global South.

### The South as Outside

This leads us to a related yet distinct use of the North-South worlding as an inside-outside imaginary: the North is inside, represented, and in power, while the South is outside, dispossessed, misrepresented, and excluded from power. That is, North/South does not only denote colonial entanglements or levels of development, but in/exteriority. The South, as Comaroff and Comaroff (2016, 47) point out, “always points to an ‘ex-centric’ location, an outside to Euro-America.” But more than an outside to Euro-America, the South is also used to signify the outside to “the international.” The Global South here being the voiceless, misrepresented, and mis-recognized in world politics. Much in line with the Bandung spirit, the Global South becomes a signifier for the “despised,” “dispossessed,” “hurt,” “unregarded,” and “voiceless” as Sukarno

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37 Interview, São Paulo, June 12, 2013.
38 Interview, San Diego, April 4, 2012.
(1955) put it in his opening speech then. The peoples on the planet who do not make decisions, but for whom decisions are made.

In the interviews with Brazilian scholars, the widespread use of the concept of international *insertion*—of Brazil and with it the Global South—conveys such an imaginary in which “the international” is an exclusionary sphere, something you can be outside. The basic notion underlying “insertion” is that Brazil, like the rest of the Global South, is constituted by its “outsider” status as a peripheral country not properly inserted into the world. As a political project, the insertion of the Global South as “Global South” aims to penetrate these barriers of exclusion, to gain a global voice, and decision-making power. The excluded and misrepresented “Southern outside” is therefore often connected to a view of the Global South as a place “where the global political society is emerging,” as the “emerging nations” that need to be inserted (Mignolo 2011, 165). “Insertion” thus implies more than breaking from dependence and becoming autonomous, but also to redeem a rightful role “inside the international.” Several quotes illustrate the exclusionary logic. For example, one scholar argued that Brazil has transformed

> [T]o a country that is much more sophisticated and is mainly *into* the world. Because 20 years, 15 years ago, 30 years ago, 20 years ago, we were outside of the whole world. We intended to be part but we are much more inside of it, because it is a big country, doing our homework (...) So after doing that we started climbing, going out of our frontiers, to there and to here. So we started to play an actor, world actor, a global actor in many different places, BRICS, IBSA and that or United Nations, economic banks etcetera, etcetera. So we became an important, relevant actor. 39

Or, as this scholar continued, the “Brazilian view is that the world is dead because Brazilian never came to be part of, it is always United States, France, England, wawawawa.” 40 Here Brazil is articulated as a country that was economically, politically, and even academically excluded from the world. To a Southern country “outside the world,” the problem is how to formulate strategies of insertion. The concept of “Inserção Internacional” is, therefore, emphasized by some interviewees as a particularly Brazilian or Southern perspective on international relations. Similarly, it is argued that theories produced by “the North” cannot effectively prescribe strategies for “more autonomous forms of international insertion” (Bernal-Meza 2016, 5)

39 Interview, Rio de Janeiro, June 21, 2013
40 Interview, Rio de Janeiro, June 21, 2013
Insertion is about futurity and becoming. As one interviewee stated, “Insertion is a word which in itself expresses what you want to be and the future and a purpose.”\(^{41}\) Several interviewees argued that there “is consensus about the insertion,” that it is “not under discussion” and even that Brazil’s insertion in the international system” is a cláusula pétrea or ‘eternity clause’ of Brazil’s foreign policy and the key to the Brazilian perspective on the world: “the international insertion of Brazil is one idea of long term (...) because there is one big idea among the Brazilian elite. The following idea: Brazil will be a great power in the future.\(^{42}\)

The aspirations for insertion have been intrinsic to Brazilian foreign policy ever since the Versailles Peace Conference when Brazil (unsuccessfully) tried to be inserted into the League Council by making the case that it had general, not only specific, interests in the functioning of the world (Lafer 2000, 220; Fonseca 2011, 377; Saraiva 2014). In the negotiation of the post-WWII order, Brazil almost succeeded in gaining a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, but failed again (Fonseca 2011, 378). Brazil officially announced its aspiration for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council again in 1994 (Lima and Hirst 2006, 28–29). Brazil’s candidacy for a permanent seat in the Security Council is seen as “natural” as its “credentials are indisputable” (Fonseca 2011, 393). “Insertion” into the Security Council, as advocated by former foreign minister Celso Amorim (2011) in a Foreign Policy article titled “Let Us In,” has remained a key objective, at least until recently. As a retired diplomat argued in an interview, “it’s impossible not to aspire” as aspiration is “part of our psychology,” as captured in the axiomatic phrase “Brazil, Land of the Future” (Zweig 1941). “The problem,” this interviewee continued, “is that aspiration has a cost” and that Brazil, given recent economic troubles, might be better off as an aspirant—what is pithily known as the eternal land of the future—than actual member of the Security Council.\(^{43}\)

The systematization of Brazilian concepts about “International Insertion” has been mostly associated with the “Brasília School” (Arend 2010, 1; Kristensen 2019), and is seen by its leading scholar as a distinctly Brazilian contribution to international relations (Cervo 2009, 49). As Cervo (2009, 65) explains: “Building concepts applied to the international insertion of Brazil corresponds to a methodical mental exercise, done with the purpose of producing knowledge and generating comprehension to international life, in addition to reflecting praxis and suggesting paths of action” (see also Saraiva 2009; Bernal-Meza 2009; Cervo and Lessa 2014; Saraiva 2014). To proponents, the distinctiveness of “international insertion” also lies in its difference from foreign policy and diplomacy. Insertion is about how the entire country interacts with and is inserted into the world. As an interviewee who claims to have invented the concept explains: “So our case is

\(^{41}\) Interview, São Paulo, June 14, 2013.
\(^{42}\) Interview, São Paulo, June 15, 2013.
\(^{43}\) Interview, Rio de Janeiro, January 24, 2019
challenges for Brazil in coming decades in its international insertion as I call it. Not just foreign policy, foreign policy is very small part of it (...) It’s about how multinationals interact, how municipalities interact, how the financial world interacts.”

A senior Brasilia school scholar explains the distinctiveness of “insertion” and also argues that he invented the concept:

Insertion is a concept that I created (...) I invented the concept because I was working with the thing, with the phenomenon, and I didn’t find a word to express this phenomenon, the insertion. Insertion is not international relations only, international relations of Brazil. It is lot which is the role of diplomacy in negotiation, which is the role of the state, which is the role of the politician, including the academy.

The distinctiveness of insertion, in this scholar’s representation, is its widening from the state and foreign policy to the international activities of other societal actors. Yet, the Brasilia School on international insertion remains a hybrid of structuralist and realist theory where a strong “logistical state” serves as the tool for Brazil’s international insertion (Cervo 2003, 22). The logistical state is envisioned as an active instrument to insert Brazil into the world, including in “the design and management of world order” (Bernal-Meza 2010, 208).

“Insertion” also denotes emergence. It has a family resemblance to “rise” but diverges in important ways. “Rise,” as applied to China and India, does not imply that they were ever outside but rather that they were former great powers, subject to colonization and imperialism, and now erected to their rightful place are re-emerging. The discourse of “insertion” builds on a more “Southern” worldview than rise because it draws its conceptual baggage from dependency thinking (Hurrell 2013, 30). The project of inserting Southern emerging powers simultaneously embodies a notion of the existing order as exclusive, rigid, and frozen. As one observer of Brazilian IR notes, the “motif of ‘insertion’” involves looking at “the economic question of how the country can find its way in an international structure that is given and immutable” (Moore 2008, 31). The idea is that status quo powers have used multilateral institutions to “freeze power” and secure an advantageous position (Fonseca 2011, 386). The idea of a “freezing of global power” coined by Araújo Castro is influential in Brazilian foreign policy and international relations (Miyamoto 1999, 86; Herz 2002, 17; Lima and Hirst 2006, 28; Fonseca 2011, 387). Brazil’s insertion functions as a force for change in this otherwise frozen order. The project gained further prominence under President Luiz Inácio Lula when, as one interviewee stated, Brazil became more “futuristic” and more focused on “insertion.”

In 2003, Lula told Brazil’s diplomats that “The government has made a political decision to insert Brazil into

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44 Interview, São Paulo, June 13, 2013.
45 Interview, Brasília, June 17, 2013.
46 Interview, São Paulo, June 14, 2013.
the world as a major country, a country which likes to respect others but at the same time a country which wants to be respected” (Hurrell 2010, 60). The insertion discourse is one of solidarity and justice, of representing the world’s weak and un(der)developed states. Insertion is thus presented not only as the insertion of Brazil, but of Brazil as representative of the South.

Critical interviewees, however, characterized “this view that you have to insert the country” as “nationalistic” and overly state-centric and power-based.47 It is what others have called a “South from above,” not below (Prashad 2012, 12). It should also be noted that recent economic and political troubles means that the aspirational and futuristic hopes for international insertion have faded somewhat: “We are so bitten nowadays,” one interviewee argues, that our “naive confidence has worn out” even if the notion that “Brazil is destined to greatness” has survived in some corners.48 Certainly the Southern dimension to the insertion project has faded under the recent right-wing governments, especially the current far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, a retired diplomat noted, which brings us to the politics of the South.

**The South as Political Move**

“The South” is also used in the interviews as an intervention in political debates on Brazilian foreign policy and the future of multilateralism. The Global South is deployed here, much in line with the “insertion” argument above, as a political South, as what Hofmeyr (2018, 307) calls the South of “multilateral elites.” The South of inter-governmental South-South cooperation, IBSA, BRICS, G20, G77, UNASUR, and so on. In Brazilian foreign policy debates, a major point of contention is its relative South (Africa, Latin America, Asia) versus North/West orientation (Portugal, Europe, North America). This tension reflects Brazil’s “fundamentally ambivalent insertion in the world system” (Cesarino 2012, 100), but also intersects with an ideological left-right orientation. So while there may be general consensus on “Brazil’s aspiration to play an influential international role,” the means for “insertion” are politicized and subject to debate: more liberal or indigenous, Northern/Western or Southern, through integration into international rules, norms and institutions or through autonomy and strengthened South-South relations (Giacalone 2012, 339; see also Lima and Hirst 2006). As an interviewee identifying with the liberal and Northern foreign policy line argued, “The main is split is about Cardoso versus Lula and the foreign policy followed by [each] one” with Lula pursuing “South-to-South relations” and never aligning “automatically with ‘the West’ and with the US specifically.”49

During the left-wing Worker’s Party Lula presidency (2003-2010), the major foreign policy goal was
to promote Brazil’s insertion into the club of great powers as a voice of the South (including but not limited to South America). The means to achieve this were South American regionalism in Mercosur and UNASUR and omnipresence in flexible Southern and emerging power alignments like IBSA, BRICS, G20, and G77. Lula’s diplomacy had an anti-hegemonic profile, and exerting regional autonomy from the American empire has long been a project of the Worker’s Party (Almeida 2010). Lula’s Global South foreign policy has been read as an attempt to overcome the “stray dog” complex (Amorim 2010, 239)—as a foreign policy of “auto-estima” (Burges 2005, 1133) and self-confidence with a “Southern slant” (Hurrell 2010, 60). As one interviewee argued, Lula’s government coincided with “the moment when Brazil was mixing the Global South and the emerging condition.” So where Southernness was previously a negative identification, an “anxiety-laden ‘lack’ generated by their perceived inferiority status vis-à-vis the West” in Vieira’s (2018, 158) terms, Lula’s administration recast it as a “positive hybridity.”

There has been a shift away from South-South cooperation and toward the North under subsequent governments, however. The shift North started under the center-right Michel Temer government (Marcondes and Mawdsley 2017) and has not only accelerated, but also taken a different guise under the far-right Bolsonaro who ran on a nationalist, anti-globalist, anti-multilateralist, and certainly less South-oriented foreign policy. As one critical scholar phrases the North-Right (and implicitly South-Left) association: “the idea of the crazy new foreign minister [Ernesto Araújo] is to be like aligned to the United States and to forget everything that is from left, of course.” Other interviewees, including some identifying with the center-right, view Bolsonaro’s particular North-orientation as a “totally different ballgame,” “alt-right,” “crazy” and “the first foreign policy rupture.”

Several interviewees saw the ideological debate over Brazil’s relative South or North orientation foreign policy as “the main driver” of Brazilian IR, arguing that the Brazilian IR debate “has also a lot to do with who is in government” and that politics “was a split much more than IR theory.” There are no IR debates per se, only vicious ideological debates on foreign policy, contended a senior scholar who identified with the left. Foreign policy debates cannot be separated from IR debates and scholars therefore use left-right arguments to criticize their scholarly opponents. The North-South divide should be seen in this light. For example, one professor argued that the stress on Southernness “depends who you talk to and [is] part of the political debate in Brazil” with the left emphasizing Southernness and the (center-)right stressing that

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50 Interview, São Paulo, June 14, 2013.
51 Interview, Rio de Janeiro, January 24, 2019.
54 Interview, São Paulo, June 12, 2013.
Brazil is “part of the Western world, as part of the multilateral system created by the Western world.” The academic debates over a “Brazilian” or “Global South” perspective on international relations, too, are “very much affected by ideology” a foreign trained scholar argued. Some interviewees directly noted that Lula’s politics of auto-estima and Southern pride inspired academia to “look at the world from the South.” A young scholar sympathetic to the project of developing “indigenous” Brazilian concepts makes this connection between “the inflection point of our foreign policy” shifting toward the South, BRICS, and Africa under Lula and a concurrent “point of inflection” in the academy “of creating our own concepts,” “more autonomous thinking of our intellectual community,” “indigenous themes and creating our indigenous methodologies” and a sense that “we can create our own perspective.” With Lula came not only greater interest in South-South, the BRICS, and distance from North America but also a stimulus to the project of developing indigenous Brazilian “concepts.” Meanwhile, critics of the Worker’s Party’s (PT) foreign policy were critical of the construction of Southern IR perspectives from Brazil: “the question is that what is new, what is different in Brazil, what the theory that is different is a theory that is a lot oversimplified on the present, the difference, the North-South divide. So to me, it is obsolete the North-South divide.” The question of developing a distinctly Southern perspective on international relations is therefore also politicized and meets critique, mainly from scholars who identify as liberals or center-right. Especially after the recent years of corruption scandals and economic recession, critics from the center-right portray the political positioning of Brazil as a Southern power as “overstretch,” as an over-eagerness to “be in the limelight, to become a celebrity country.”

Conclusion

Many recent attempts to deprovincialize the discipline of international relations have focused on its “Western-centrism” and searched for “non-Western” or “post-Western” alternatives. The project of worlding IR beyond the Anglo-Euro-American core also takes the form of developing Southern concepts that speak back to Northern IR, however, and this article explored what the Southern locus of enunciation looks like in the case of Brazil. Compared to cultural-civilizational conceptions of “West” and “non-West” (which are sometimes, but of course not always, deployed in ways that suggest radical difference), the Brazilian scholars interviewed did not conceive Brazil’s distinctiveness in terms of cultural or civilizational difference.

55 Interview, San Diego, April 4, 2012.  
56 Interview, Brasilia, June 17, 2013.  
57 Interview, São Paulo, June 13, 2013  
58 Interview, São Paulo, June 15, 2013  
59 Interview, Brasilia, June 19, 2013.  
60 Interview, São Paulo, January 28, 2019.
Rather, the Southern locus of enunciation comparatively stresses imperial and political economic entanglements, “peripheral” concerns, and “tropical” problems such as autonomy, development, and insertion into the core. It is important to stress that these uses of the “South” are contended and embedded in political debate over the direction of Brazilian foreign policy, as well as academic debates balancing between universalism and methodological nationalism.

Furthermore, some of these uses of the South have Brazilian particularities that do not easily travel to other Southern worlds, at least beyond South America, and even then do not do justice to the various “Southern assemblages” and comparative “Southernizations across the Americas” (Milian 2011, 148, 140). One possible particularity is the influence of the Latin American dependency worldview on the relational conception of the South conceived in core-periphery terms that stresses international political economy over both culture and security concerns. It is at least a question for further research whether this worldview is as prevalent a part of Southern worldings beyond Latin America. Moreover, in terms of Southern problematiques, the aversion to the study of “Northern” problems like military force, war, terrorism, and traditional security and a comparatively stronger focus on “Southern” problems such as international political economy, development, and autonomy are also likely to be more case-specific. A final particularity concerns the use of the South as third space that hybridizes Brazil’s position in-between West and non-West; that Brazil is widely seen as Western in terms its colonial legacy, cultural, religious, and political institutions, but different from the established Anglo-European West in that it has historically been Southern, dependent, and poor. The balancing between the Westernness and Southernness of Brazil has a long history, and its particular “international insertion” project can be read as an attempt to bridge the worlds of the West and the South or, earlier, “First” and “Third” World (Cesarino 2012, 98; Hurrell 2013, 32). The stress on Brazil’s Westernness led several interviewees to argue that (post)coloniality has no relevance in Brazil and even that Brazil will offer nothing different, no indigenous or pre-colonial traditions. This particular Western-but-Southern constellation is unlikely to be transferable to other Southern worlds, although this too would require further studies of the uses of the South in other contexts. Of interest here would not only be the study of other hybrid worldings, such as the South-East, but also a more comparative approach to these different Southern worlds.

Despite a recent shift, in terminology at least, from “non-Western IR” toward “Global IR,” this article emphasized the importance of retaining a certain sensitivity and curiosity toward the different cardinal points in this debate, the world of worlds out there, and the different political projects they embody. The article is not an argument that we should replace the essentialist West/non-West binary with an equally essentialist Global North/South binary, i.e. move from Orientalism to “Australism” (Tlostanova 2011, 74). It is not enough to simply turn the world upside-down, while leaving the Manichean dualism between Euro-
America and its others intact (Comaroff and Comaroff 2016, 7). Some of the uses of South, including some analyzed above, have an auto-Australist element. But it is important to stress that they are also hybrid, fractalized, and contended. Loci of enunciation are not shaped by single but multiple (dis)placements and interpellations. There are Souths in the North and Norths in the South. This article should therefore rather be read as an encouragement of further explorations of the different cardinal points or meta-geographies that guide the debates on alternative or non-Eurocentric perspectives on international relations with a sensibility toward how they intersect, to the hybrid constellations in-between, and the different, sometimes competing and contested, uses of these cartographies.

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